

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Report of the National Endowment for the Arts April 6, 2000

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the provisions of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 959(d)),

I transmit herewith the annual report of the National Endowment for the Arts for 1998.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
April 6, 2000.

Interview With Dan Rather of the “CBS Evening News” April 6, 2000

Mr. Rather. First of all, thanks for doing this.
The President. Glad to.

Elian Gonzalez

Mr. Rather. I want to talk to you about guns, gun legislation. But the day’s news is on Elian Gonzalez. His father is here; the boy’s father is here. How soon can he expect to see the child?

The President. Well, first, I think we should say it’s a good thing that he’s here. I’m glad he’s here. And the Justice Department is working on that, and I think in a way we’re fortunate to have an Attorney General who understands this issue, because Janet Reno was the prosecutor in Dade County for many years. And they’re working on it. I don’t know, I can’t answer with any specifics. But I have confidence that they’ll do the best they can to handle it in an expeditious and sensitive way.

Mr. Rather. “In an expeditious and sensitive way.” Mr. President, from almost all other citizens, if the Immigration Service rules, and a Federal judge backs the ruling, then people will obey the law. What’s happened here?

The President. Well, I think the people—you can ask them; they can speak for themselves better than I do. But they, I think they feel that they’re not sure that the process was adequate since it occurred in Cuba. I think that’s basically what’s going on.

And you know, some of the people there are just against anybody going back to Cuba. But I think there are a lot of people who have genuine questions about it. And I think the fact

that the father has come here and will be in a position to show his concern for and desire to be reunited with his son should be a big help. And as I said, I think the Justice Department will do a good job here, and I think Attorney General Reno really understands what’s going on. And I think we’ll work through it.

Mr. Rather. You have consistently said that the father speaks for the son. You stand by that?

The President. Well, that’s the decision that was made by the INS. They went down and interviewed the father extensively. And they concluded that based on his previous contacts, which were regular, with his son, that he was a fit representative to speak for his son. And under our law, since Elian Gonzalez is a very young child, someone must be the designated person to speak for him. And under our law, the parent, as long as he is a fit parent, is that person.

So the INS made the decision that they felt was appropriate, and the judge ruled that they had the authority to make it. And now the family members in Miami are appealing to the Court of Appeals and arguing that there ought to be a more extensive inquiry into his best interests. That’s the legal position.

But I think that the main thing is that the Justice Department is handling it and that in the end the law ought to prevail. And I don’t think that the young man’s best interests are served by the rest of us talking about it too much. I think the Justice Department is going